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DE RUEHAK #0517/01 0661521
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1242
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7874
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2271
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 1719
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5787
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 2007

In Today's Papers

Kurdish Leader Sentenced for Calling Ocalan 'Mr'

All papers report Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP leader Ahmet Turk has been given a six-month prison sentence for calling the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan "Mr. Ocalan" at a meeting in Diyarbakir in January last year. The court said Turk used "Mr," an expression of implied respect, more than once in the same speech. Turk said using "Mr" constituted no crime in any part of the world, stressing it would be impossible for them to exercise politics under such conditions.

On the other hand, the lawyers of DTP Diyarbakir branch chairman Hilmi Aydogdu have filed a complaint against Turkey's counter-terrorism envoy Edip Baser for insulting Aydogdu by calling him a "creature." Aydogdu was arrested for saying last month an attack on Kirkuk would be perceived one made on Diyarbakir.

US Annual Human Rights Report

Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report US State Department annual human rights report mentioned the restrictions on free speech and press in Turkey as well as a rise in "honor killings" and anti-Semitic publications. The report says the role of military in Turkish politics and the Kurdish and Armenian questions constitute the main issues of debate, noting individuals joining such debates risk facing lawsuits. The 23,000-strong Jewish community in Turkey is worried with regard to the rise of anti-Semitic literature, a good example being "The Valley of the Wolves" movie, says the report. It also notes 1,806 "honor killings" have been committed in Turkey between 2001-2006.

Turkey Seeks Missile Defense System

Tabloid Aksam reports that on March 1, the Turkish Defense Industry Undersecretariat (SSM) announced it will purchase four long-range missile defense systems for the Turkish Air Forces. The paper says Turkey's anti-missile project was backed by the US, and claims the decision indicated preparation for a possible military operation

against Iran. The conservative-nationalist Turkiye, however, claims Turkey is developing its own missile system independently from the US. It says Turkey will choose from among the US Patriot, Russian S-300 and 400, and Chinese FD-2000 missile defense systems. Turkiye says the system will be set up in Ankara and Istanbul whereas Aksam claims it will be either in Malatya, Erzurum, Diyarbakir, Mus, or Batman.

Cumhuriyet claims Ambassador Toria Nuland, the US representative to NATO who visited Ankara earlier this week, pressed Turks to take part in the US nuclear missile shield. Turkey, however, fearing deployment of US missiles at home could displease its main energy provider Russia, stays distanced to the US proposal, according to the paper.

Ambassador Schlicher on Cyprus Oil Rights

Milliyet, Cumhuriyet and Zaman report the US Ambassador in Nicosia, Ronald Schlicher, has said signing offshore licensing agreements for oil exploration in eastern Mediterranean was the sovereign right of Greek Cyprus. Schlicher said those "doubtful" about the Cyprus Republic's right to make oil deals should follow "legal and peaceful procedures." Schlicher also noted, "the US is of the opinion that the July 8, 2006 [the Gambari process] should be implemented at once, targeting a launch of the real negotiations." Schlicher was meeting with Dimitris Hristofyas, the Greek Cypriot parliamentary speaker and the secretary-general of the left-wing AKEL party.

Meanwhile, The Islamist-oriented Zaman reports the EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn, meeting Greek Cypriot Foreign Minister George Lillikas yesterday, called for an implementation of the direct trade regulation drafted by the EU Commission in July 2004. Lillikas, opposing the use of Turkish Cyprus ports for direct trade,

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said before launching direct trade, there should be political unification, economic integration, and increased cooperation between the two communities in the divided island.

Tuzmen Seeks Israeli Support against Armenian Resolution

Mainstream Hurriyet reports State Minister Kursad Tuzmen, heading a Turkish businessmen's delegation in Israel for economic talks, called on the Israeli businessmen and politicians to support Turkey in the face of the Armenian resolution in the US. "Turkey and Israel do not only share historical ties, Turkey is the second country after the US in receiving Israeli tourists. The Turkish and Israeli peoples have always lived together in harmony and friendship; we now expect your support with regard to the Armenian resolution," Tuzmen told a seminar in Tel Aviv.

Writing in the tabloid Posta, Mehmed Ali Birand recommends getting Armenia "on Turkey's side": "Let's get Armenia on our side: Now the strongest advantage Turkey has in the genocide struggle is its relations with Armenia. The importance of this advantage will grow even more during the political phase of genocide allegations in other countries. Developing economic relations with Armenia and opening borders will both increase Turkey's prominence in the region and ease some of the pressure it is under. The talks about how to establish relations with Armenia and how mutual approaches can be reorganized will not be binding for anyone. If conditions that cannot be met arise during these talks, the simplest thing to do would be to leave the table. However, even the news that Turkey and Armenia are in meetings will have positive consequences in the international arena."

Editorial Commentary: Iran

Zafer Atay writing in the economic-political daily Dunya, warns of the consequences of an attack on Iran: "Given the conditions of Iran, the US probably hopes to finish the job using air bombardment.

Yet whether it will be good enough to finish the job is questionable. And we should also keep in mind the possible aftermath scenarios. Iran might incite more terrorism through the Shiite terrorist groups and might cut off the oil flow from the Gulf. Turkey will face immediate consequences both diplomatically and economically if a new crisis emerges right next door."

TV Highlights

NTV (6 A.M.)

Domestic News

- Istanbul Forensic Medicine Institution will examine Ocalan's blood samples and hair to find out whether there are any traces of chemical poisoning.
- Police in Ankara have arrested 35 members of a gang bribing Turkish employees in German, Greek, Romanian and Austrian embassies to smuggle PKK members to EU countries.
- Prime Minister Erdogan said on the eve of March 8 World Women's Day that discrimination against women was "worse than racism."
- Seven youths who composed a song mocking the Turkish university entrance system face trial for insulting public officers. If convicted, the youths will be given prison sentences up to 17 months.

International News

- A powerful earthquake rocked western Indonesia on Tuesday, killing at least 70 people.
- The Greek Cypriots are alarmed by the plans of Turkish Cyprus leader Mehmet Ali Talat to join a Turkish diaspora meeting in Azerbaijan on March 9 together with Prime Minister Erdogan.

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- EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn expressed anxiety with the frequent assaults against him in the Greek Cypriot media in a meeting with Greek Cypriot Foreign Minister George Lillikas yesterday.
- Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian lashed out at Turkey for attempting to punish the US for backing Armenian genocide claims.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON